

Procedure file

Basic information			
INI - Own-initiative procedure	2022/2063(INI)	Procedure completed	
Implementation report on the European Innovation Council			
Subject 3.50.04 Innovation			

Key players			
European Parliament	Committee responsible	Rapporteur	Appointed
	 Industry, Research and Energy		17/05/2022
		 EHLER Christian	
		Shadow rapporteur	
		 GÁLVEZ MUÑOZ Lina	
		 IJABS Ivars	
		 SOLÉ Jordi	
		 GANCIA Gianna	
		 Krasnodębski Zdzisław	
		 MATIAS Marisa	

Key events			
07/07/2022	Committee referral announced in Parliament		
26/10/2022	Vote in committee		
04/11/2022	Committee report tabled for plenary	A9-0268/2022	Summary
21/11/2022	Debate in Parliament		
22/11/2022	Results of vote in Parliament		
22/11/2022	Decision by Parliament	T9-0401/2022	Summary

Technical information

Procedure reference	2022/2063(INI)
Procedure type	INI - Own-initiative procedure
Procedure subtype	Implementation
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 54
Other legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 159
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed
Committee dossier	ITRE/9/09101

Documentation gateway

Committee draft report	PE734.459	13/07/2022	EP	
Amendments tabled in committee	PE736.369	09/09/2022	EP	
Committee report tabled for plenary, single reading	A9-0268/2022	04/11/2022	EP	Summary
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading	T9-0401/2022	22/11/2022	EP	Summary
Commission response to text adopted in plenary	SP(2023)29	08/03/2023	EC	

Implementation report on the European Innovation Council

The Committee on Industry, Research and Energy adopted an own-initiative report by Christian EHLER (EPP, DE) on the implementation of the European Innovation Council.

The European Innovation Council is one of the major novelties of the Horizon Europe Programme. Its aim is to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough, and in particular deep-tech, innovations. It intends to facilitate and enhance networking and cooperation and create synergies between different innovation communities in the EU and with the European Institute of Innovation and Technology (EIT) in particular, ensuring broad geographical coverage. It was set up to foster Europe's technological strategic autonomy as well as to improve the functioning of the European venture capital market.

Implementation issues

The report highlighted fundamental implementation issues in particular concerning the management of the EIC Fund. The EIC Accelerator which provides financial support to individual Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has been criticised for the delays in the implementation of the blended finance actions.

Members are deeply concerned about the announcement in early 2022 of changes to the structure of the Fund compared to the situation under the EIC Pilot, when companies from the first two cut-offs in 2021 had already been selected for funding.

Recalling that the EIC Fund is set up to support start-ups and SMEs developing deep-tech innovations, the report stressed that cash flows are crucial for start-ups and SMEs, and that long delays in receiving expected funding can bankrupt these kinds of companies.

Staffing issues at the EIC Fund were also raised.

Recommendations

The committee made a number of recommendations to improve the implementation of the EIC.

Members called on the Commission to re-assess its implementation of the EIC Fund and to find a new management mode that reflects the ambitious and transformative nature of the EIC as the investor of reference for breakthrough innovation in Europe. The Commission should include, inter alia, the following principles in its new approach:

- ensure that the implementation of both the equity and grant components are under the full control of the Commission, which should also ensure that there is a direct coordinating line between the implementation of the two components, and safeguarding the ability of the Commission to intervene at any stage of the investment cycle to ensure that investments of strategic importance are made;
- make full use of the added value of co-investment by external investors, while maintaining the possibility for the EIC Fund to: (i) be the sole investor, including through taking equity without co-investment from external investors being required; (ii) be the major investor without leading the investment round; (iii) lead an investment round;
- ensure efficient collaboration with national contact points as well as regional authorities if applicable.

Moreover, Members urged the Commission to enter into an open dialogue with Parliament, the relevant programme committee and the EIC Board in order to develop an alternative long-term solution for the structure of the EIC Fund which fully respects the relevant Union legislation and the above-mentioned principles. They recommended that a thorough assessment be made of ways to improve the EICs implementation, considering as an option the establishment of an independent Union body as the main entity responsible for implementing the EIC.

They underlined the need to ensure that applicants are always treated equally, and that implementation safeguards transparency, accountability and prevention of conflicts of interest.

The Commission is also called on to:

- introduce a system of continuous and quick evaluation of the performance of the EIC;
- include a rigorous and continuous assessment of the evaluation procedure;
- include measures to improve the participation of SMEs and to make the EIC Accelerator accessible and attractive for innovative SMEs, by simplifying the application process in order to remove barriers for SMEs;
- ensure that the instrument supports a wide range of projects in terms of their scale, so that small companies developing and scaling up high-impact innovations can have equal access to it;
- revise the EIC Accelerators current submission process and its time-to-grant period, aligning the EIC platform with the evaluation criteria of the EIC Accelerator;
- improve synergies and collaboration with the EIT. The EIT and the EIC should set up reciprocal and systematic exchanges of information.

Implementation report on the European Innovation Council

The European Parliament adopted by 592 votes to 19, with 8 abstentions, a resolution on the implementation of the European Innovation Council.

The European Innovation Council is one of the major novelties of the Horizon Europe Programme. Its aim is to identify, develop and scale up breakthrough, and in particular deep-tech, innovations.

Implementation issues

Parliament highlighted fundamental implementation issues in particular concerning the management of the EIC Fund. The EIC Accelerator which provides financial support to individual Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) has been criticised for the delays in the implementation of the blended finance actions.

Members are deeply concerned about the announcement in early 2022 of changes to the structure of the Fund compared to the situation under the EIC Pilot, when companies from the first two cut-offs in 2021 had already been selected for funding. Members stressed that cash flows are crucial for start-ups and SMEs, and that long delays in receiving expected funding can bankrupt these kinds of companies.

Parliament recalled that EIC blended finance should be awarded through a single process and through a single decision covering both the grant and the financial instrument components. It also acknowledges the staffing concerns raised by the Commission regarding the management of the EIC Fund investment portfolio. It appreciated that staffing at the EIC Fund needs to be appropriate and that this means that a significant number of staff with significant experience are required.

EIC Fund as a sole investor

Members are concerned about the apparent policy for the EIC Fund never to be the lead investor in an equity round, in particular in combination with the requirement for companies to bring in matching co-investments from external investors. They believe that this goes against the strategic objectives of and main logic behind the EIC and stressed that co-investment should not be an upfront requirement for projects but rather an objective of the EIC Fund during the lifetime of the grant project.

Implementation flaws

Parliament stressed the importance of an accessible and effective application procedure in a programme aimed at attracting the most ambitious innovators. The procedure could be further improved and simplified for both single and multiple beneficiary proposals. Members are also concerned about the apparent lack of transparency in the management of the programme and are deeply concerned about the functioning of the AI platform.

Recommendations

Parliament called on the Commission to re-assess its implementation of the EIC Fund and to find a new management mode that reflects the ambitious and transformative nature of the EIC as the investor of reference for breakthrough innovation in Europe.

The Commission should include, inter alia, the following principles in its new approach:

- ensure that the implementation of both the equity and grant components are under the full control of the Commission, which should also ensure that there is a direct coordinating line between the implementation of the two components, and safeguarding the ability of the Commission to intervene at any stage of the investment cycle to ensure that investments of strategic importance are made;
- make full use of the added value of co-investment by external investors, while maintaining the possibility for the EIC Fund to: (i) be the sole investor, including through taking equity without co-investment from external investors being required; (ii) be the major investor without leading the investment round; (iii) lead an investment round;
- ensure that the investment strategy for equity investments follows the strategic objectives of the Union, which would encourage the EIC Fund to take risks as the sole investor, in particular to encourage the participation and success of under-represented regions and female-led businesses;
- ensure efficient collaboration with national contact points as well as regional authorities if applicable.

Moreover, Members urged the Commission to enter into an open dialogue with Parliament, the relevant programme committee and the EIC Board in order to develop an alternative long-term solution for the structure of the EIC Fund which fully respects the relevant Union legislation and the above-mentioned principles. They recommended that a thorough assessment be made of ways to improve the EICs implementation, considering as an option the establishment of an independent Union body as the main entity responsible for implementing the EIC.

They underlined the need to ensure that applicants are always treated equally, and that implementation safeguards transparency, accountability and prevention of conflicts of interest.

The Commission is also called on to:

- introduce a system of continuous and quick evaluation of the performance of the EIC;
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- include measures to improve the participation of SMEs and to make the EIC Accelerator accessible and attractive for innovative SMEs, by simplifying the application process in order to remove barriers for SMEs;
- ensure that the instrument supports a wide range of projects in terms of their scale, so that small companies developing and scaling up high-impact innovations can have equal access to it;
- revise the EIC Accelerators current submission process and its time-to-grant period, aligning the EIC platform with the evaluation criteria of the EIC Accelerator;
- improve synergies and collaboration with the EIT. The EIT and the EIC should set up reciprocal and systematic exchanges of information.

Transparency				
GÁLVEZ MUÑOZ Lina	Shadow rapporteur	ITRE	18/07/2022	Oficina Española de Ciencia y Tecnología E.P.E. (CDTI)
GÁLVEZ MUÑOZ Lina	Shadow rapporteur	ITRE	18/07/2022	European Commission (DG R&I)